

THE LABOUR ORGANISER

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Topics of the Month

THE District Council Elections have come and gone, and without any great stir. So far we have not seen any figures purporting to be a complete return, which show how Labour has fared at the polls. Such evidence which has reached us shows that Labour did well, and many fresh victories are recorded. Is it because there is now less left in the spring elections due to the decreased powers of Guardians' elections that so little stir is created? The Urban Councils, ought at least to be well fought, and some noise created by the victories therein. The prevailing unemployment makes the selection of Local Government candidates more difficult, particularly in the rural areas where the fighting is always uphill, but we should have liked to have seen more evidence of a general advance everywhere showing that Labour was keeping its weapons bright for a bigger task later on. Next year the County Councils must be fought, and it is not at all too early for County Federations of Local Parties to begin to consider their plans for the campaign, and for all Parties in County Council areas to look round for candidates and seek means for co-operation with others in the same County Council area. There are heaps of seats that can be won outright if Labour puts its back into the work. These reactionary Councils badly need the advent of strong Labour groups.

During the last month we have heard a lot about the "united front," and in some quarters we have heard criticisms because the National E.C. and the T.U.C. decline to co-operate in this matter with the Communist Party and its imitator, the I.L.P.

Such criticism shows how little some of our friends understand the situation, and the implications of co-operation with the Communists. It need hardly be repeated that if a united front is needed, one need look no further than the Labour Party and the T.U.C., whose umbrella is wide enough to embrace all sections who really have the same object in view. And that is the crux of the question. The National Joint Council of the T.U.C., the Labour Party and the Parliamentary Labour Party have wisely issued a series of documents on this question, which are an exposure of the snare into which the Communists would lead the bigger movement if the latter were fools enough to fall in. Unfortunately, the documents are lengthy, and unlikely to be read and considered so much as they deserve by Labour Party meetings. We therefore think it desirable to point out what the Executive Committee of the Communist International advise as a basis of agreement for common action. Here they are: Mass Protests; Street Demonstrations; Political Mass Strikes; Committees of Action in Workshops and Factories, Labour Exchanges and Workers' Quarters; Self-Defence Groups, etc. We ask with all solemnity what fool in our ranks seriously suggests that a strike in this country is going to help our comrades in Germany?

The formation of self defence groups, or the belief that it is necessary to organise in some way now against the possible triumph of Fascism in this country, seems to affect the complex of certain ill-balanced people in our own ranks. At a Party meeting we attended the other day in an area where there were less than twenty individual members, one of our wild men, who has certainly got into the wrong camp, spoke vehemently on the question of organising not individual members, but

persons who would be prepared to meet force by force. In this town of 25,000 inhabitants our friend could not get three people to walk up the street with him, but he decried the mere conversion of people to Socialism and the enrolment of members as merely useless methods. What tiresome folk some people are. It cannot be pointed out too plainly that what has befallen the workers in Germany is almost entirely due to the Communist talk of force in that country. Force has begotten force, just as positive electricity in the clouds induces negative electricity in the earth. In the case of Germany the forces opposed to the Communists secured power first, and in the process of crushing Communism, the true Socialist Party has been caught in the mill. So much for force, and what the talk of force does for Socialism. The National E.C. and the T.U.C. are wise in their generation in declining to be caught, and in emphasising their opposition to dictatorship—come from what quarter it might.

In the course of one's advocacy of the penny a week contribution for Labour Party members, one comes across opposition from time to time from several quarters. It is almost unbelievable that genuinely convinced Socialists would boggle at the payment of so small a weekly contribution and one wonders sometimes whether parsimoniousness is an attribute particularly fatal to persons who have imbibed an extra dose of the criticism complex. Certain it is that we ourselves have found such opposition as we have met almost invariably to come from crusted comrades for whom nothing is ever right in our Movement. They fail to see the utter failure of cheap membership everywhere, and they are so mean as to want their full dose and portion of criticism at the lowest possible price. Meanness as a matter of fact, is right at the bottom of nearly every objection we have heard urged against the institution of the penny a week contribution. Shall we in the next paragraph apply the "Mean Test" to some of these comrades?

Mr. Arthur Woodburn, the Scottish Secretary, in this week's "Forward" mentions the case of a teacher Socialist, in a struggling constituency, who, when asked for his penny a week said

he was "too advanced" for the Labour Party. And so, of course, this teacher saves his 4s. 4d. per year, and conserves his energies so that he can lie content under the lash of capitalism and the persecution of his profession. This teacher passes the Test—he is just a mean fellow. In another area the other day an ex-Divisional Secretary was appointed as a Ward Secretary. As a Divisional Secretary he had been a complete failure, and in a town with several thousand Labour voters the membership was virtually nil. This officer's first action in his ward was to oppose the institution of the new contribution. Too blind to see his past failures, and too mean to pay, this gentleman also passes the Test. In another town the opposition to the scheme came principally from two trades union officials. The weekly contributions to this union are over one shilling a week, and levies are sometimes made. The two trades union officials are substantially paid men, and have held their posts for years. They wanted cheap membership, and to tell the truth they have still got it. These two people also pass the Test—they are too mean for words. We could illustrate further if the matter didn't pain both us and our readers. Still, we make members, and the peoples' pence is proving a power in the land and building for us in many constituencies a mighty Movement.

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Some Reports and Balance Sheets

We desire to express our grateful thanks to our readers in all parts of the country who have favoured us again this year with copies of their annual reports and balance sheets. We regret that it is impossible to mention all of them, but we assure our readers that each one of them is perused with interest and care, and although the reports are not always full enough, almost without exception they speak of progress and fresh endeavour.

The Ilford Trades Council and Labour Party report an increase in membership last year of 379, bringing the total to 2,426. The membership contributions showed an increase of £79 6s. 3d., making a total for the year of £395 2s. 10d. A sale of work produced £155 1s. 4d. and the total income, excluding balances carried forward, reached £720 14s. 1d. There is a balance of assets over liabilities of £286 3s. 4d. Industrial membership showed an affiliation of 2,424 members. The Labour Agent is Mr. R. T. Holness.

The Aberavon Divisional Labour Party report a total affiliated membership of 17,116. The report roundly rates members of the Party because there is not a larger proportion of the supporters in the Division enrolled as individual membership: 23,129 votes were polled for the Labour candidate in 1931 General Election, and there are 1,264 individual members. The report rightly states that there should be at least a 5,000 membership. The results of the November elections in this Division were very encouraging. Agent, Mr. J. A. Brown.

The report of the Barkston Ash Joint Co-operative and Labour Committee and of the Barkston Ash D.L.P., are published together, and from this document we note that the membership last year was about double that for 1931, exceeding 1,200 at the close of the year. The report speaks of 2,000 supporters who signified their willingness to join, and points to losses that may have been sustained in the collecting system. It is good that facts should be plainly stated in this manner, so that remedies may be found. Local elections were successful in this Division. Agent, Mr. C. A. Shepherd.

We note from the balance sheet of the Peterborough Divisional Labour Party that £150 per annum is contributed each year to the Divisional Labour Party by the Peterborough Local Labour Party. There are 1,300 members in this Division. Agent, Mr. R. A. Watson.

The report of the Hendon Constituency Labour Party is an informative and exhaustive document which reflects considerable credit on the officers concerned, particularly seeing that no agent is employed. A table included in the report shows steady progress in the development of individual membership, and the income derived therefrom. For some reason the figures of the Hendon Local Labour Party are not included in the final analysis for last year of membership and fees. We note, however, there were 1,200 members for the rest of the Division, and the accounts include a profit of £46 13s. 11d. on a bazaar. The balance in hand at the year's end reached nearly £50, and was an increase of £23 on the balance carried forward. Secretary, Mr. G. R. Richardson, 19, Sunningfields Road, Hendon, London, N.W.4.

From the report of the Chippenham D.L.P. we note that this is one of the Labour Parties making due preparation for the next General Election. The election fund account shows a balance of £84 8s. 6d., and although the other figures in the financial statement are not large, the fact just mentioned shows an appreciation of future responsibility.

The report of the Derby Labour Party is always an exhaustive and thoroughly interesting document. We hope Mr. J. H. Thomas is duly interested to learn that there was a 50 per cent. increase in the Party's membership last year, and that this year individual membership is booming. So far 2,200 membership cards have been issued (March), and the financial difficulties into which the Party was plunged following Mr. Thomas's deflection and the burden of fighting this great constituency in 1931 is being rapidly removed. The report as published, is virtually a red book of the Derby Labour Movement. Agent, Mr. W. R. Raynes.

The report of the Whitehaven D.L.P., indicates that considerable progress is being made with membership in this Division. Last year the Party paid a sum of £43 1s. 8d. nett to Head Office in respect of membership cards, and the balance sheet indicates that the stamp system is working exceedingly well in most of the local areas. Apparently, penny stamps are issued free to local Parties, and to take an example from the use of other stamps we note that the Whitehaven Local Labour Party used 12,290 at a halfpenny, producing £25 12s. 1d. to Divisional funds. This local Party also used 600 two-penny stamps, 270 threepenny stamps; 300 fourpenny stamps and 95 shilling stamps.

East Ham North Labour Party, whose actual membership is not yet to hand, shows a gross income from members' subscriptions last year of £291 7s. 5d. Some effective organising literature is to hand from this Division, some samples of which we hope to reproduce in an early issue.

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ARTHUR PEACOCK,
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LONDON, S.W. 12.

(Concluded from opposite page.)

The Labour Party has circularised Divisional Labour Parties proposing the setting up of local Advisory Committees for Socialist Research and Education. Such bodies would, in effect be Advisory Committees to their respective Borough, Divisional or Local Labour Parties.

It is urged that such Advisory Committees would assist the study and discussion of draft policy documents issued by the National E.C.; provide an avenue of activity for members attracted to this type of work; improve the quality and understanding as well as the number of Party members; and develop research into local problems.

Divisional Parties have recently been reminded of the payment of their quota to the by-election fund. It is suggested that affiliated organisations without waiting for a reminder might remit their quota directly a public announcement is made that the Party will contest a particular by-election. Constituency parties pay an affiliation fee of 7s. 6d. per by-election.

The Platting (Manchester) Divisional Labour Party have reprinted as a leaflet the article by the Rt. Hon. J. R. Clynes, entitled, "Ten Years More of Unemployment," which appeared in the "Labour Magazine."

The "Land Worker," one of the best and brightest trade union journals in the country, has since 1926 published lists of fortunes left by farmers including only wills of over £8,000 each. The total of the 1,815 wills published in the seven years is £39,406,809—an average of about £21,650 per will. These poor farmers!

The "Labour Magazine," "Labour Bulletin" and "Industrial Review" are shortly to amalgamate. The new paper is to contain the best features of all three.

SCARBOROUGH.

"LANSBURY," Private Hotel, North Cliff, provides excellent accommodation for your holidays in SCARBOROUGH. Modern, comfortable, good and quick service. Terms: Mrs. Flint.



The Birmingham Borough Labour Party have a scheme in operation for the financing of by-elections, similar to the national by-election fund. Each ward is called on for a fixed levy in respect of every by-election. A similar scheme operates in Sheffield and in both places is successful.

The Birmingham Borough Labour Party are also well away, as usual, with their panel of Municipal Candidates for the "November" elections. Eighteen names are on the panel of nominations received from affiliated organisations, and twenty-eight names are on the panel of nominations received from Labour Parties and Ward Committees and Sections.

Our readers visiting Blackpool for holidays this year are advised to write to Mr. Sam Hague, of 50, Sherborne Road, Blackpool, whose advertisement appears in another column. We can assure them of every comfort and every satisfaction.

The Chesterfield Labour Party have commenced publication of a quarto fly monthly journal, known as the "Chesterfield D.L.P. Monthly Bulletin." It is edited by Councillor E. Swale, and well done.

The Heanor and District Local Labour Party, a flourishing and up-to-date organisation, recently ran a local bazaar. Profit £40 to £50. Well done!

The "Torch" is the title of a quarto ten page monthly, which has commenced publication in the Harrow Division and has been made possible by the co-operation of the Local Parties on somewhat unique lines.

The "Torch" has a printed cover and there are six pages of duplicated matter, four of which are standardised for all the Local Labour Parties in the Division, the remaining two

pages being localised. Each Local Party is responsible for producing its own two pages, and for collating and stapling the number of journals required in its locality. The "Torch" is distributed free to members.

The Gorton Labour Party Women's Section have hit upon the unique idea of collecting the birthdays of its members. Each member on her birthday receives a nicely got-up birthday greeting. If circumstances permit the member gives a small gift in return to the section. Many Happy Returns to the Gorton Women's Section!

Councillor J. Henshaw, of Ilkeston, writes: "The 'L.O.' is a storehouse of information. I look forward to its regular delivery. It is the thirteenth year of issue and still improves . . . Each issue ever useful and never out-of-date."

"Plebs" for April: "Crosses on ballot papers, useful as they are, are no substitute for an *educated* working class movement." A sentiment with which we heartily agree, and the moral from which we hope our readers will be quick to see.

"Forward" in its issue for April 8th, reports an enthusiastic gathering of members and friends in West Edinburgh, the occasion being a presentation to Mr. John Welch, late Labour Agent. Mr. Welch was presented with a mahogany sectional bookcase, and Mrs. Welch with a cut crystal flower vase and stand — rewards upon which we congratulate our two friends. Mr. Welch was eight and a half years an agent for this division.

An interesting allocation of the proceeds of members' subscriptions is made by the Pollok (Glasgow) D.L.P. The minimum contribution is 4s. 4d. per annum, being a return to the Division of 4s., after payment for the members' card. This is apportioned as follows: — Collector, 25 per cent.—1s.; D.L.P. Secretary, 6½ per cent.—3d.; D.L.P., 25 per cent.—1s.; Ward Committee, 25 per cent.—1s.; Women's Section, 12½ per cent.—6d.; Borough Labour Party, 6½ per cent.—3d.; total, 4s.

(Concluded on previous page.)



QUESTIONS ANSWERED HERE

Disqualified Borough Councillor.

Question: A is an insurance agent and is paid on a commission basis, he is elected a member of a Town Council; after being a member for a short time he, through the tramways manager, insures, on behalf of the company of which he is an agent, all the corporation motor buses.

The same Councillor is a member of the Transport Committee and insures the motors in connection with the Transport Committee. This is done direct with the manager as in the previous case.

In view of the fact that he collects the premium and receives a part of same as commission does it affect his position as a Councillor?

Answer: It appears to us that the Councillor named is disqualified under the provisions of Section 12 of the Municipal Corporations Act, 1882, which reads:—

“A person shall be disqualified for being elected and for being a Councillor if and while he . . . has directly or indirectly by himself or his partner any share or interest in any contract or employment with, by or on behalf of the Council . . . but a person shall not be so disqualified or be deemed to have any share or interest in such a contract or employment by reason only of his having any share or interest in . . . any company which contracts with the Council for . . . insuring against fire any part of the borough.”

We have quoted the latter proviso because from a previous enquiry it appeared that the exemption for interest in an insurance company was not generally known. We believe, however, that even the latter exemption applies only to interest in the company itself as a concern, and not to personal interest in a particular contract.

In the case our questioner asks about, it seems clear that the councillor referred to comes under the provisions of Section 12, and the question arises as to what should be done about it. The procedure under the M.C.A. is none too satisfactory in this respect. The disqualified person is liable to a fine of £50 for acting in a corporate office after becoming disqualified. But no easy means have been provided for getting a disqualified person out of office. Something can be done by drawing the attention of the Council to the disqualification either on a motion by a councillor, or by letter if there are not Labour Councillors on the Council. If the erring Councillor does not then accept the position and resign, or vacate his office, the only procedure open is for a local government elector to take action to recover the penalty. Legal advice is required for this purpose.

A Study Scheme Enquiry.

Question: I have recently obtained the Labour Party's certificate of proficiency in electoral law and party organisation. Is it necessary to undergo a further examination to obtain a Grade A certificate, or is this only obtainable by practising full-time agents? Can you also please tell me what are the terms of appointment of agents in accordance with Labour Party scale and conditions?

Answer: By the terms of the original scheme for study and examination, there were two classes of certificates laid down, i.e., Grades A and B. Grade A certificates were to be granted to persons who had passed an examination and Grade B certificates were for full-time agents, who had already completed a satisfactory term of service, and qualified in other respects. The latter certificate was virtually a service certificate.

As the scheme is now worked, every person who passes the examination receives a Grade A certificate, but there is a difference in the form of the certificate for practising agents, and that for other members of the Party. The reason for this is that the practising agent receives a certificate which is virtually a combination of the examination certificate and the service certificate. Obviously such certificate would be unsuitable in form for any other member of the party—hence the distinction. There is no distinction in value, except of course such merit as may be implied by the outline of service given on the certificate of a full-time agent.

Regarding our friend's second question, the conditions relating to the appointment of agents have been the subject of several conference decisions, and they are embodied in a somewhat lengthy document to be obtained by parties interested in the matter from the Head Office of the Party. The matter is too long to reprint here.

Account Books for Local Parties.

Question: I should be glad to know if the "Labour Organiser" has published anything in the nature of useful book-keeping requisites of a standard order. Your collectors' books fill a long-felt want, and I should like to know if you have now got any account books and similar things?

Answer: We appreciate our correspondent's opinion of our collectors' books. The proof of the pudding is in the eating, and the fact that they have had such a ready sale proves our friend's statement that they fill a long-felt want. At the same time we are not proposing to publish any standard account books or other matter of the kind enquired of by our correspondent. It is probable that if a keen demand for such standard books existed, that the Labour Party might take the matter up, but a standard book which would suit the need of every party would be difficult to compile. The needs vary somewhat, and at least two forms of standard books would, in our opinion, be required.

In 1930 we published a series of articles on book-keeping for local Labour Parties and reproduced a number of specimen accounts. The articles then published recognised the differing needs of local parties, i.e.,

the distinction between small parties and those which carried on a certain amount of trading or had larger accounts, and we illustrated suitable methods for both types of parties. The methods we suggested could be grafted on to standard account books readily obtainable from local stationers.

In the Labour Party publication entitled "Party Organisation," this matter is also dealt with, and suggestions are to be found on pages 10 and 11.

Secretary's or Executive's Annual Report?

Question: I am submitting the following point of difference that has arisen in our Party, and I would very much appreciate it if you could give an interpretation or ruling on the following matter.

The constitution of our Party states under the heading of definition of duties . . . The General Secretary shall conduct all correspondence and prepare an annual report . . . that is the end of the paragraph dealing with that matter.

For the past two years the report has been drawn up as stated, sent to delegates with the agenda for the annual meeting, discussed at the annual meeting, has been amended and then adopted, after which, of course, it becomes the Report of the General or Management Committee.

The opinion is now expressed that the Secretary should submit his report to the Executive Committee of the Party, who in turn would amend and adopt it, it would then become the report of the Executive Committee to the General Committee.

You may know of definite precedents in the matter. I should, however, very much appreciate any assistance you can offer to put the whole matter in proper order.

Answer: In the first place, we might comment that the rule referred to by our correspondent, does not appear in the Model Rules of the Party. It did, however, appear in the rules which were current prior to the Conference held at Brighton in 1929, when the new rules were adopted.

The old rules defined precisely the duties of the secretary, the treasurer and financial secretary, and made general certain matters which are best left to local working, and on which some variation of practice must arise according to the size of a Party.

While there are such things as secretaries' reports and agents' reports to be presented to general meetings, we much prefer an annual meeting to be provided with a report of the year's working on the collective responsibility of the Executive itself. Collective responsibility is, after all, an important matter, and it makes for efficient working.

Everyone, of course, knows that the Executive Report is the handiwork of the secretary or agent, and his personality, if he has any, is certain to be expressed in it. At the same time, its submission to amendment by the Executive is quite proper. If there is any feeling at all about it the Executive would be wise to embody a secretary or agent's report as a part of their own report.

Resolutions Dissenting from National Policy.

Question: At our annual meeting held the other day some of our local Labour Parties sent in resolutions which were ruled out of order because they did not accord with the Labour Party's declared policy and programme. Some of our members evidently have not read anything about the resolutions passed at the last conference, but at the same time some of us felt that the resolutions ought not to have been ruled out without a discussion, and we were in a bit of a quandary to know what would be our position if some of the resolutions were passed, and are not in accord with national policy. Can you please enlighten us upon this subject?

Answer: As our readers will be aware, the recent tendencies of Democratic Parties in all parts of the world have not been in the direction of encouraging internal dissent on questions of policy. This arises from the fact that so far as the British Labour Party is concerned, at any rate, matters of policy have been well discussed, and are now fairly crystallised; besides this, all Democratic Parties are now much closer to grips with their opponents, and in the face of the enemy unity is more than ever essential.

At the same time the Labour Party has at no time in its history attempted to stifle adequate discussion on its policy, or denied attempts to modify or define this or that item, so long as there was general support and a

fairly wide acceptance of the main principles for which the Party stands.

Local Parties should be careful how they pass resolutions which may clash with conference decisions. Certainly they should at no time allow such resolutions to become public, for there can be no such thing as local policy on a national question as distinct from national policy. This expression of opinion must not be taken as limiting the right of a Party to table a motion for the annual conference of the Party, which may express a divergence from present policy. If the fact were otherwise our policy once formulated could never be changed. In similar circumstances to those outlined by our correspondent, we suggest that discussion can be obtained on a motion that such resolutions should be promoted by the Party for submission at the next annual conference. There would, of course, still be certain resolutions which might be altogether inadmissible, but, as we understand our correspondent, the resolutions named had principally to do with the question of compensation or otherwise for nationalised industries; there can be no doubt that such matter is a fair and proper one to be brought in the normal way before the annual conference.

Proportional Representation. Advertising to our answer on this question published last month on page 48, we are indebted to the Fabian Society for the statement that both publications mentioned in our reply are still in print, and can be obtained from the Fabian Society, 11, Dartmouth Street, London, S.W.1. The publications named were "P.R.: Its Dangers and Defects," by George Horwill, 6s., and Fabian Tract 211, "The Case Against Proportional Representation," price 2d., post free 2½d.

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LAW AND PRACTICE



Intimidation or Undue Influence.

Vague charges of undue exercise of influence are the commonest form of complaint by the losing side in an election. How many times has it not been declared that such and such a landlord, or an employer of labour, or a minister of religion has brought an unfair influence into the scale? Sometimes such charges are justified, but more often they arise from the irritation not unnaturally connected with defeat in a contest. As was pointed out by a learned judge:—

“The law cannot strike at the existence of influence. The law can no more take away from a man, who has property, or who can give employment, the insensible but powerful influence he has over those whom he can benefit by the proper use of his wealth, than the law could take away his honesty, his good feeling, his courage, his good looks, or any other qualities which give a man influence over his fellows. It is the abuse of influence with which alone the law can deal.”

But Parliament does forbid as undue influence the threatening or inflicting of any injury, temporal or spiritual, “or any fraudulent contrivance to restrain the liberty of a voter, so as either to compel or frighten him into voting or abstaining from voting, otherwise than he freely wills” (as witness the 1931 Election! — Ed. “L.O.”).

The law is severe where it is proved that the freedom of even one voter has been interfered with unduly. For instance, where an employer of labour, who was a member of the candidate’s committee, and canvassed for him, threatened to discharge any man who voted “wrong,” the election was avoided. Clearly such conduct

amounted to “undue” influence, and forfeiture of the seat ensued.

Again, it is most improper to threaten withdrawal of custom from a tradesman in consequence of his political opinions. Hot-headed partisans in some rural districts are rather apt to breathe threats of this kind, but by so doing they are not only putting themselves in peril of the law, but they jeopardise the election of the candidate, whose cause they fancy they are assisting. Anything of the kind should be strenuously discouraged. At his workers’ meeting, in dealing with prohibited acts, the candidate should explain clearly that the exercise of the franchise must be entirely free and unfettered.

There is another form of this offence which has to be guarded against in some constituencies and that is the threat of spiritual consequences. A minister of religion has, and rightly has, considerable influence with his flock, nor does the law seek to prevent its legitimate exercise. But there is a point beyond which religious guidance must not go in the free exercise of the franchise. The law cannot be more clearly summed up than in the following extract from a judgment where clerical influence was the point in question:—

“In the proper exercise of that influence on electors the priest may counsel, advise, recommend, entreat and point out the true line of moral duty and explain why one candidate should be preferred to another, and may, if he think fit, throw the whole weight of his character into the scale, but he may not appeal to the fears or terrors, or superstitions of those he addresses. He must not hold out hopes of reward here or hereafter, and he must not use threats of temporal injury, or of disadvantage, or of

punishment hereafter. He must not, for instance, threaten to excommunicate or to withhold the sacraments, or to expose the party to any other religious disability, or denounce the voting for any particular candidate as a sin or as an offence involving punishment here or hereafter. If he does so with a view to influence a voter, or to affect an election, the law considers him guilty of undue influence."

General intimidation, or such a state of riot as prevents men of ordinary courage from freely recording their votes, would avoid an election, even although neither the candidate nor his agents had any hand in it. From "Municipal Elections and How to Fight Them" (O.O.P.)

THE ATTACK ON CO-OPERATORS.

Some Suitable Literature.

The agitation against the rumoured proposals of the Government has, we trust, already enlisted the services of most of our readers in the various protests that are being made. We have to hand from the Co-operative Union, a budget of publications, which are of first rate value in the campaign, and which should be of service to our readers in making them more fully acquainted with the facts of the situation.

"The Income Tax Report Exposed," by R. A. Palmer, General Secretary of the Co-operative Union, is an attractive twopenny pamphlet, which covers the matter in a readable manner. "The Manual for Speakers," by R. A. Palmer and J. S. Simm is for more intensive reading, and is an armoury of facts and arguments of extreme importance. Incidentally, we should add that the Co-operative Union also publish some notes for speakers, which are numbered to correspond with the paragraphs in the Speaker's Manual.

A number of leaflets have also been issued in connection with the campaign and these are each attractive and well got up.

Our readers are reminded that the Labour Party, Parliamentary Labour Party, and the Trades Union Congress have issued a joint appeal to the Labour, Socialist and Trades Union Movement urging that Trades Councils, Labour Parties and other local Labour Organisations should get into communication with the Secretary of the nearest Co-operative Society with

a view to the co-ordination of local effort in the protests being made. The attention of Parliamentary Members, Candidates, Organisers, Propagandists and Agents, is also drawn to this campaign, and the signatories to the appeal mentioned suggest that each of these persons should take the opportunity of dealing with the Co-operative case in the course of their platform work as occasion offers. We very strongly urge our readers to act upon the lines suggested.

A MONEY-RAISING DEVICE EXPLAINED.

In another part of this issue will be found the advertisement of Messrs. Taylor and Rogers, who are promoters of a coupon scheme adopted by many organisations and institutions for money raising purposes.

The basic part of the scheme is a coupon of the value of one penny. These coupons are supplied by the firm mentioned, and are sold to customers. Coupon collecting at the present time is almost a rage, and customers are encouraged to buy as many coupons as they can afford each week. The coupons may be exchanged at any time for goods, i.e., cutlery, clocks, furniture, fancy goods, haberdashery, household linen, clothing, etc. Catalogues of goods are published, though in some cases the manufacturer's own catalogues may be used, and the goods chosen therefrom. The goods appear to be all at a reasonable price—shop price or lower.

The customer is further encouraged to collect coupons in this wise by the fact that each week a list is published of free gifts to coupon holders. A coupon is therefore not only of its face value, but it may be one which will entitle a customer to quite a handsome gift free of charge.

Under the scheme the organisation selling the coupons is entitled to 25 per cent. of the value of the coupons sold. The scheme is made easy to begin with—inasmuch as no money is sent in the first place—the first week's coupons being dispatched upon order free of charge, cash being sent for them after sale. The coupons for each week are dated and dispatched ten days in advance, thus giving opportunity for the organisation of sales. Readers interested in this matter should write the firm for further particulars, and explanatory literature.

NOTES and NOTIONS

PROVED, POOLED, PROOFED
AND PRINTED



We have noted a recent tendency on the part of some Labour Parties to appoint part-time agents where full-time agents have formerly been employed. The reasons given are various but it is time that a word of warning was issued in this matter. In some cases a change has been made because the late agent did not, so it is alleged, give satisfaction to the Party. Bearing in mind the extraordinary difficulties of the past few years, we venture to suggest that any judgment of an agent's work should at least be tempered with some consideration of the exceptional difficulties which the Party has passed through. Whether, however, the judgment regarding an agent no longer in the services of the Party be sound or not, the failure of one organiser affords no manner of excuse for seeking to put in his place a lower paid officer, with obviously less time or opportunity to command success. We frankly admit that good organisers are scarce; when found they are worth their weight in gold in both literal and metaphorical sense. That a Party may not have succeeded in getting hold of one of the born organisers of the Movement is no reason at all for denying their existence, and indeed, the Movement largely has itself to blame that organisers are not more plentiful inasmuch as the wrong considerations altogether have often entered into the appointment of agents. Quiet, systematic, yet vigorous workers have often been passed over in favour of a "spouter" and a more flashy personality. The reckoning was bound to come, but the blame for individual failures should not be placed at the door of the agents, but of those whose judgment has been at fault in the past in failing to train or procure the right type of person.

We regret the tendency to appoint part-time agents on other grounds altogether. We are convinced that the bigger Parties and larger membership which is required in the constituencies in the future, necessitates the employment of a whole-time business and organising head. In this matter constituencies should look ahead. If in any division the resources are not immediately available to guarantee the salary of a full-time organiser, some special means for getting at least six months salary together ought to be tried before embarking on the experiment of part-time work. Or, at least, if a part-time man is ultimately appointed, some specific date might be fixed for a review of the whole position, and a determined effort to make the appointment full-time. The Labour Movement risks a good deal of its self-respect, of its consistency and even of its honesty by appointing part-time officers to what should be full-time posts. Would our Movement countenance part-time engine-drivers; part-time engineers, part-time shop assistants or part-time miners? We think not. These part-time agencies are all too often clothed with deceit and pretence; the part-time workers virtually doing the full-time job at half-time pay. And, to use plain words, this is sheer sweating and humbug. We ourselves know of several appointments where the part-time agent has no other employment, nor has the Divisional Party even troubled to enquire into that matter. To treat of another aspect of this matter, we know places where these appointments have been made merely because it is contended that the full-time agents' rate of pay is too high. What a commentary on the Trades Union principles of friends who held this view and act thus. If

the salaries of agents are too high there is machinery for getting that matter adjusted, but we deny in toto that the scale at present in force is too high for the responsibilities, and for the type of man whom the Movement should seek to train and attract. The labourer is worthy of his hire—that philosophy we have always applied in relation to the labourers of capitalism. Do we have another theory in respect of our own servants?

We have to thank our readers for the usual batch of Local Party balance-sheets and reports which reach us at this time of the year. And we have at the same time to give some good advice. At least fifty per cent. of the statements of account which reach us are not understandable in their details, however, clear they may be—and we sometimes doubt even that—to the meetings which pass them. Items of income and expenditure are again and again put down which are not sufficiently expressive, and which mean nothing to outsiders. Then again, balance-sheets showing assets and liabilities are more conspicuous by their absence than otherwise. Supplemental information apart from the statement of accounts is given in many cases, but it is desirable in many others. Some Parties give Ward, Women Sections and Local Party accounts in addition to Divisional accounts, and this course is to be advocated. As for the annual reports we confess that in our view most reports which reach us fail to give just the information which we think is needed. We have just read ten reports, and not one of them gives the actual membership of the Party, though some of the Parties show very substantial sums as received in income from this source. Some reports give us the position in respect to local elections and the strength on Local Government bodies. The majority neglect this matter altogether. We appeal to our friends to give attention to these questions, and to endeavour to make their annual returns documents which should speak for themselves when placed in the hands of members or prospective members. We are happy to note the increasing tendency towards printing these documents.

We believe that during the last year or two there has been a falling off in

the facilities given by the Movement to the public for securing gratuitous advice on all such matters as rent restriction, pensions, allowances, etc., etc. We record this matter with satisfaction rather than otherwise, though the reasons for the falling off are not so satisfactory, being occasioned as they are in several cases by the loss of a full-time agent. In other cases, however, the full-time agent has just reverted to his proper work, and that is to the good. We are of the opinion that however great-hearted our Party and its officers may be, it is no part of our function to expend effort which ought to be directed to building our Party and spreading the gospel of Socialism in channels which make Philadelphian lawyers of our officers and bind them to the toilsome and unthankful task of unravelling the problems so often surrounding the cases named. In many cases we believe Party officers have actually been doing, unasked, work which is properly that of Trades Union Organisers and Secretaries. They have extended to non-Trades Unionists facilities which Trades Unionists only get because they pay their contributions to a union. And the unions are not exactly thankful for this intrusion. As to full-time agents we believe the organiser's work is primarily to build and strengthen the Party in local organisation, in membership and in its propaganda and educational work. Sitting in an office giving promiscuous advice and to all and sundry, is not nearly so profitable, nor so beneficial, to the people at large, as getting on with one's own work. We know of cases where Members of Parliament are to blame for thus misusing the services of agents, and of one or two cases where the Member has also had the audacity to complain of the state of the organisation while expecting this work to be done. Well, one cannot have one's cake and eat it. Our advice to the Movement is to get on with our own job.

BOURNEMOUTH.

FOOD REFORM GUEST HOUSE.
Loughtonhurst, West Cliff Gardens.
Get right away from the Movement and have a holiday or rest with us. Terms from 49/- per week. Write Manager.

Notes from an Agent's Desk

A REGISTRATION POINT TO WATCH: UNPROFITABLE
"MEMBERS": FINDING NEW OPEN-AIR PITCHES.

By "JACK CUTTER."

The Home Office has instructed Registration Officers to leave forms A and D at each house and thus places the onus for the correctness of the record on the householders. Labour Agents in the main appear to be agreed that this is a step in the right direction and welcome the Order.

I am not so sure.

It is only good so long as the canvassers are given to understand that there is no reduction of responsibility on their part to verify the returns and ensure their correctness.

It is a strange thing that when you give the British public forms to fill in they become illiterate nitwits, flustered at the simplest question and filled with rebellious resentment at being expected to complete it at all.

The Babbitt class whose votes are ninety per cent. Tory will doubtless complete the forms fairly correctly and without undue trouble, but I cannot help visualising some of the working class districts and agricultural villages where the forms will be a sore trouble to the householders and mistakes and omissions frequent. If, however, the canvassers are competent people and are instructed by the R.O's that they must verify the completed forms in every case agents may with ordinary vigilance feel satisfied with their registers. It will be a wise precaution on our part to have a talk with our R.O's and see this is being done.

Membership Card Issue.

Membership campaigns bring their own little problems, such as what to do with the new "member" who agrees to join up and pays a penny a week for about three weeks and then becomes tired and refuses to pay any more. If a membership card, costing fourpence, has been issued this "membership" represents a loss to the party and one doesn't want many "members" of this kind.

I know it is becoming a widely accepted rule not to issue cards until sixpence or so has been paid and this is undoubtedly a wise precaution, but the mere possession of a card is frequently an incentive to a new member who, after all, is entitled to a receipt even if only a penny has been paid

and the franked card is a very convenient form of receipt. Many of my own collectors urgently advocate the issue of a card on the first payment, however small, as, they say, it creates confidence.

If, in the enthusiasm of new membership, the recruit can be persuaded to pay sixpence as the first contribution the difficulty is solved; but, as every secretary knows, it is very difficult indeed in most cases in these days of universal poverty to collect more than a copper at a time.

I think that the advantages of retaining a card until sixpence has been paid far outweigh the disadvantages, though I admit it is not a general rule in my own constituency and I have hesitated to be dogmatic to the collectors about it.

Spring Song.

In April the Labour agent's fancy more or less lightly turns to thoughts of open-air meetings. He sees his time-honoured pitches turned into car parks and the once secluded corners become traffic maelstroms in which the puny human voice cries aloud in vain, drowned in the cacophony of lumbering lorries, screeching sirens and the gear changing of juggernaut double-deckers. His speakers recoil with horror from the prospect and develop sudden attacks of tonsillitis and bronchitis for which the carbon monoxide fumes of roaring exhausts are a somewhat unsatisfactory remedy.

So he packs up his portable platform and fades silently into the gathering dusk? Not on your life! He goes round the corner and tackles the batch of little streets behind every main thoroughfare, erects his platform in the centre of the first one, puts up two of the speakers for ten minutes each and as soon as they have started takes two more into the next street for a similar programme; each two speakers do three meetings in about an hour and a half—six meetings with four speakers—not a bad evening's propaganda.

Some of the meetings are failures. No one is listening. They are all at the pictures. Some of the streets are apparently populated entirely with lusty-lunged youngsters—millions of

them. Our agent ponders that the invisible parents may benefit considerably from Socialist propaganda but a little birth control propaganda wouldn't be a bad thing either. [But not in the "Labour Organiser," please.—Ed.]

But he perseveres and here and there he discovers a new pitch where a crowd is beginning to gather. He puts up a third speaker and gives him fifteen minutes or more. Sometimes he strikes a winner in the most unlikely spot and gradually he evolves an entirely new schedule of good pitches, after a vast amount of hard work, not the least of which was the persuading of speakers to carry on after several failures. But it had to be done, for no Labour Party in these days can afford to have a summer holiday from propaganda.

**Do ALL the officers
of your Party get the
"L.O."?**

If not, why not?

**The "L.O."
serves ALL**

FROM SERFDOM TO SOCIALISM. A Pageant of History Staged in Derby.

The Derby Labour Party are to be congratulated on the enterprise and versatility of a number of their members, who to the number of nearly fifty recently took the stage at a Party social to produce a pageant of history entitled "From Serfdom to Socialism." The pageant was arranged by Mr. W. B. Steer, the Treasurer of the Derby Labour Party, and a past President of the National Union of Teachers.

There were eleven representations of outstanding characters from industrial and political history. Commencing with John Wycliffe, who taught the people to read, there followed John Ball, sometimes referred to as the first Socialist, Wat Tyler, Francis Place, the Luddites, the Derby silk weavers, Lord Shaftesbury, the Rochdale carpenter and joiner, who called at Derby

on tramp for work and spread the Rochdale experiment to Derby, Charles Dickens, Thomas Burt, the first miners' M.P., and Karl Marx.

The connecting history was explained by Mr. Steer, and the large audience (over 500) was made familiar with the great men who had blazed the trail for the modern Labour and Socialist Movement. The greatest credit is due to all those who took part for their faithful impersonations; we are afraid, however, that in some cases the audience were too familiar with the original character of the debutant to concentrate all their thoughts upon the character portrayed.

We understand the function named was really a Derby Labour Men's effort, and it appeared that the men distinguished themselves in other directions the same evening. A supper consisting of hot pies and mashed potatoes, cobs and cheese, tea and coffee, all prepared and served by the men, appeared to add not only substance but amusement to the event. The serving in fact so tickled the ladies, or perhaps so aroused their envy, that a collection was started for the "waiters"; this was handed over by the men to Party funds, perhaps a further evidence of the tremendous virtue which had pervaded them and had prompted the enjoyment of the evening.

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PAMPHLETS RECEIVED.

"Slums." By H. V. Morton. Price threepence. The Labour Publications Dept., Transport House, Smith Square, S.W.1. (Illustrated).

A reprint of the remarkable articles by this picturesque writer which appeared in the "Daily Herald." This pamphlet should prove a good seller. Though priced at 3d. one hundred copies work out at 1½d. each. We advise the placing of this pamphlet in public libraries.

"The Parable of the Water Tank," by Edward Bellamy (reprinted). Price twopence. The Labour Party, Transport House, Smith Square, London, S.W.1.

The publication of this famous parable is apparently a response to suggestions that have been made from time to time for the reproduction of some of the old time pioneer stuff. An attractive cover and a delightful story should combine to make this pamphlet a best seller. If the Movement responds this will be an additional reason for following up this venture by other re-issues.

"Royal Commission on Unemployment Insurance." Price threepence. The Fabian Society, 11, Dartmouth Street, London.

This is a 78-page pamphlet containing an abridgment of the Minority Report signed by Labour Members of the Royal Commission on 'Unemployment Insurance, i.e., Councillor W. Asbury and Councillor Mrs. C. D. Rackham. The pamphlet is of extreme value to Labour speakers and propagandists.

"The Relations of Central and Local Government." By William A. Robson. Price twopence. The New Fabian Bureau, 23, Abingdon Street, London, S.W.1.

A publication of especial interest to many readers of the "Labour Organiser." The pamphlet is extremely critical of present bureaucratic tendencies, and goes far to prove that there are better brains in the provinces than at Whitehall. Read this: "The Ministry (of Health) conducts no research . . . it publishes no periodical. On many questions it has not taken the trouble to collect information; on others it appears to take no interest whatsoever."

"War and the Workers." Price one penny. Labour Research Department, 60, Doughty Street, London, W.C.1.

This pamphlet rightly remarks that any successful working class resistance to war depends on the extent of agitation, organisation and action against imperialistic war *before the outbreak of war*, and during the war. The pamphlet is a useful and meaty contribution to a present urgent problem.

"A Countryman Talks About Socialism." By H. B. Pointing. Price twopence. The Socialist League, 23, Abingdon Street, London, S.W.1.

This pamphlet puts Socialism and the agricultural spirit in community one with another. It is a pamphlet for sale in the countryside and the cover is delightfully well done with a rural scene.

"The Control of Finance and the Financiers." By E. F. Wise. Price twopence. The Socialist League as above.

The pamphlet is a reprint of a lecture by the well-known author who expresses his view that an incoming Labour Government will almost certainly be faced with a financial panic, but that this is a situation that can be turned to advantage. The pamphlet is a further contribution to a problem regarding which much has been written lately, and to which the Movement is earnestly applying its mind.

"Socialist Control of Industry." By G. D. H. Cole. Price twopence. The Socialist League, as above.

In keeping with the general tenor of the work of the Socialist League, Mr. Cole reviews the problems regarding control which would face a Socialist Government on coming into power. He outlines some of the steps he thinks should be taken, and develops a plan for dealing with special industries. Besides this, in passing, he reviews a number of other co-related economic and political problems.

"Local Government and the Socialist Plan." By Major C. R. Attlee. Price twopence. The Socialist League, as above.

Read in conjunction with Mr. Robson's pamphlet, reviewed above, we are interested to note that Major Attlee recognises the wealth of knowledge and experience to be found among those Socialists who have worked their way up in English Local Governing Bodies, and the value that such knowledge and experience might prove to be during the transition period. The pamphlet deals with a problem apt to be overlooked by Socialists at the present time.

"Is Women's Place the Home?" By Winifred Horrabin. Price twopence. The Socialist League, as above.

The title and the authoress alone betoken what this pamphlet is about, and the line of reasoning taken. But one wonders what department of research this particular problem falls under that the pamphlet is published by the Socialist League. Its pages are enlivened by a mere man, to wit, the brilliant husband of the authoress. We have noted and duly smiled over the illustrations.

The Blind Voters Bill, 1933

A Bill has been introduced into Parliament having for its object the enabling of a person incapacitated by blindness to take a relation or friend to the polling booth to assist him in marking his paper. Under the present law the blind person has to tell the Presiding Officer in the presence of the representatives of the candidates the name of the candidate whom he wishes to vote for. We are sure our

readers will agree the risks run by the voter under the present procedure should be minimised as in this Bill. There are no fewer than fifty-eight thousand blind voters in the United Kingdom.

We are pleased to say that there is every prospect of the Blind Voters' Bill going through Parliament as an agreed measure, and we therefore print the text of the Bill.

A Bill to amend the Ballot Act, 1872, so as to enable any blind voter at a poll regulated by that Act to avail himself of the assistance of a friend, and for purposes connected with the matter aforesaid.

1.—(1) The Ballot Act, 1872, shall have effect as if in the rules for elections set out in Part I of the First Schedule to that Act, there were inserted after rule 26 the following rule:—

"26A. Where any voter who is incapacitated by blindness from voting without assistance, and who is accompanied by another person, makes application to the presiding officer to be allowed to vote with the assistance of the person accompanying him (hereinafter referred to as "the friend"), the presiding officer, if he is satisfied by a declaration made in accordance with this rule that the friend has attained the age of twenty-one years and has not previously assisted more than one person to vote at the election then taking place, shall grant the application, and thereupon anything which is by this Act required to be done to or by the said voter in connection with the giving of his vote, may, notwithstanding anything to the contrary in this Act, be done to, or with the assistance of, the friend, as the case may be.

"The said declaration shall be in the form set out in the Second Schedule to this Act, or as near thereto as circumstances admit, and shall be made by the friend in the presence of the presiding officer and be given to that officer and attested by him.

"The name and number on the register of voters of every voter whose vote is given in accordance with this rule, and the name and address of the person assisting him to vote, shall be entered in a list (in this Act referred to as "the list of blind voters assisted by other persons").

"Such a declaration as aforesaid shall be exempt from stamp duty, and no fee or other payment shall be charged in respect thereof."

(2) Section four of the Ballot Act, 1872 (which provides for the punishment of persons infringing the secrecy of the ballot in any manner specified therein) shall have effect as if at the end of the first paragraph of that section there were inserted the words "No person, having undertaken to assist a blind voter to vote, shall, without the authority of the blind voter, communicate to any other person any information as to the candidate for whom that voter intends his vote to be given or for whom his vote has been given, or as to the number on the back of the ballot paper issued at a polling station for the use of that voter."

(3) The amendments specified in the schedule to this Act, being minor and consequential amendments of the Ballot Act, 1872, shall be made in the provisions of that Act mentioned in the said schedule.

2.—(1) This Act may be cited as the Blind Voters' Act, 1933.

(2) References in any Act passed before the commencement of this Act to the Ballot Act, 1872, shall be construed as references to that Act as amended by this Act.

(3) This Act, in so far as it relates to matters in respect of which the Parliament of Northern Ireland has power to make laws, shall not extend to Northern Ireland.

SCHEDULE.

MINOR AND CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS OF THE BALLOT ACT, 1872.

1. The rules for elections set out in Part I of the First Schedule to the Ballot Act, 1872, shall have effect subject to the following modifications, that is to say:—

- (a) in rule 21 (which requires the presiding officer at a polling station to exclude therefrom all persons except electors, the clerks, the agents of the candidates and the constables on duty) there shall be inserted after the word "candidates" the words "any person accompanying a blind voter for the purpose of assisting him to vote";
- (b) in paragraph (5) of rule 29 (which specifies the things which a presiding officer must seal up and deliver to the returning officer on the conclusion of the poll), after the words "tendered votes list" there shall be inserted the words "the list of blind voters assisted by other persons," and after the words "unable to read" there shall be inserted the words "the declarations made by persons assisting blind voters to vote";
- (c) in rule 38 (which requires certain documents relating to an election to be forwarded by the returning officer to the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery), after the words "tendered votes list," there shall be inserted the words "lists of blind voters assisted by other persons," and after the words "statements relating thereto," there shall be inserted the words "declarations made by persons assisting blind voters to vote."

2. The Second Schedule to the Ballot Act, 1872, shall have effect as if the following form were inserted therein:—

"Form of declaration to be made by a person assisting a blind voter to vote.

"I, _____ of _____

hereby declare that I have attained the age of twenty-one years, and that I have not previously assisted any person [except _____]

of _____] to vote at the election now taking place.*
(Signature of the person making the declaration).....

(date).....

"I, the undersigned, being the presiding officer for the polling station for the [county] [borough]* of _____, hereby certify that the above declaration, having been first read to the above-named _____, was signed by him in my presence.*

(Signature).....

(date)..... : (hour).....

"N.B.—If the person making the above declaration knowingly and wilfully makes therein a statement false in a material particular, he will be guilty of an offence."

**Strike out the words in square brackets, if inappropriate.*